Nova Scotia Tourism Product Development Plan

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Executive Summary

In November of 2000, the Nova Scotia Tourism Partnership Council (TPC) unveiled a new "Nova Scotia Tourism Strategy" to guide the industry and government for the next three to five years. Product development, marketing and partnerships were identified and integrated as essential elements of the Tourism Strategy and the implementation plan. From the tourism strategy, a marketing plan and product development plan were developed. The two go hand in hand, as you cannot market what you do not have and you should not develop what the market does not want. The Council, therefore, determined that a *product development plan* was needed and would be created.

The Product Development Plan serves as a basis for the Tourism Partnership Council to formulate an annual strategic Action Plan that will clearly identify priorities for product development. In addition, the plan will lead to the adoption of long-term objectives and strategies to help maximize tourism benefits and competitively position Nova Scotia in the world marketplace. Created under the auspices of the TPC's Product Development Committee, the Product Development Plan's mandate is to substantially increase Nova Scotia tourism revenue by encouraging the growth, quality, competitiveness and sustainability of product development in Nova Scotia's tourism sector.

It is important to note that this plan is based on the Tourism Product-Market Match Study, the specific objective of which was to access Nova Scotia's tourism products by consolidating existing market and product research, providing a basis for scoring and ranking tourism products on both product and market criteria. In addition to this assessment and research consolidation, the process identified information and research gaps, emerging products for future development consideration in Nova Scotia, and key infrastructure needs as well as the most pressing product development needs within each product category. The Product-Market Match Model created as part of this study provides a tool which will assist in preparing product development strategies and setting priorities. The Model is designed to be updated as new market data and insights become available and also to be fine-tuned to reflect different priorities.

The Product Development Plan is a province-wide initiative, which recognizes the many stakeholders involved in product development, such as tourism industry members, regional tourism industry associations, regional development authorities, provincial and federal governments, municipalities and community groups. Although the plan is very broad, not all of the initiatives discussed will be implemented in the short term. With input from various stakeholders and discussion forums throughout Nova Scotia, the Product Development Committee has identified strategic objectives for the next three to five years for implementation. Recognizing there is not one group or organization responsible for all product development efforts, this plan is designed to collectively work towards common goals.

For the first year of the plan, three priority "experience areas" have been identified for development; the **authentic seacoast experience, outdoor/nature experience, and the culture**

& heritage experience. While "Quality" and "Build a 12-Month Season" are two of the overall strategic objectives in the Tourism Strategy, it was decided that these issues need to be integrated throughout all the priorities rather than highlighting seasonality or quality as specific priority areas. To grow the tourism industry, the shoulder and winter seasons need to be developed and enhanced. Under these two seasons a number of development opportunities exist and have the potential of increasing overall visitation, length of stay and tourism revenues. Likewise, quality will be a part of every initiative we undertake.

For the initial year of 2002, within the Annual Plan, an action plan has been created for each priority by identifying specific initiatives for implementation, along with potential partners, timing, status and measurement. It should be mentioned that the priorities outlined in the action plan will not remain constant. An annual review and evaluation will be completed and an Annual Plan developed to identify the priorities for subsequent years, and to encourage stakeholders to identify opportunities, take a lead role and implement specific actions. This will ensure the tourism industry as a whole will have the opportunity to work together toward the achievement of our common goals.

The Tourism Partnership Council cannot implement this plan alone – it is imperative that our industry stakeholders support the plan, by becoming involved and identifying the initiatives they will focus on implementing.

Introduction

Each year the Nova Scotia Tourism Partnership Council prepares and releases the annual Marketing Plan which outlines the key strategic markets and tourism marketing activities for the upcoming year. Likewise, it was recognized that a provincial Product Development Plan was needed in order to focus discussion and activities on product development and the Council's Product Development Committee accepted the challenge.

Over the last decade there have been a number of plans developed that looked at product development in Nova Scotia. In 1992, a *Product Development Strategy and Action Plan* was completed by the Tourism Sector of Voluntary Planning. Unfortunately, this plan was not widely distributed nor adopted at the time. Subsequently, during 1995, the tourism stakeholders in Nova Scotia went through a process of developing a strategic plan for the industry, to guide their efforts for the next five years. In 1996, *A Strategy for Tourism in Nova Scotia* was released, presenting the seven goals the industry adopted, along with priority strategies and actions including product development.

The ideas in the 1996 *Strategy for Tourism in Nova Scotia* still remain valid to this day. With the 1996 Strategy at the end of its intended lifespan, the need to renew our focus was identified. Consequently, an updated *Nova Scotia Tourism Strategy* was prepared through a collaborative effort between industry, communities and government. The Strategy integrates marketing, product development and partnerships as essential elements of the strategy and implementation plan. The following Product Development Plan is an integral component of this *Strategy*.

In the development of a provincial Product Development Plan, one of the first challenges is to recognize that everyone has their own definition of what is meant by tourism product development. In some cases it may be very specific to building attractions and tourism services, while others include aspects of quality, technology, research, transportation, industry business development, human resource development, financing, and coordination. For the purpose of this Product Development Plan, a broad approach was taken as it was difficult to treat each issue in isolation. Additionally, it was felt that all tourism development issues needed to be in one plan, so that on a yearly basis, the committee could develop an annual plan based on specific priorities and review results, without losing the issues that might be dealt with in subsequent action plans in years two, three, etc.

It is also important to recognize that not one group will be the sole implementing agency for this plan. In Nova Scotia, there are numerous players involved in product development especially when you consider such a broad definition. In addition to the Tourism Partnership Council and respective committees (e.g., Product Development Committee, Vision Committee, Marketing Committee), there are many sector associations that have a role to play in product development (e.g., Hotel Association of Nova Scotia, N.S. Restaurant and Food Service Association, Tourism Industry Association of Nova Scotia). Within the province there are regional product

development efforts conducted by regional industry tourism associations, regional development authorities, municipalities, and community tourism and development associations. Many government departments both federally (e.g., Human Resource Development Canada, Canadian Heritage, Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Enterprise Cape Breton Corporation, etc.) and provincially (Tourism and Culture, Natural Resources, Transportation and Public Works, Sport and Recreation, Economic Development, etc.) have an active role in product development as well.

The Plan in Context

The vision and mission of the Nova Scotia Tourism Partnership Council are reasonable starting points for the Product Development Plan:

TPC Vision Statement

"Realize Nova Scotia's tourism potential as a world-class four-season destination for the benefit of all Nova Scotians."

TPC Mission Statement

"The Nova Scotia Tourism Partnership Council's mission is to grow the tourism industry in the province, increasing the number of tourists that visit Nova Scotia and increasing the amount they spend while in the province."

Based on the vision and mission, three high-level goals have been identified for the Nova Scotia Tourism Strategy which also apply to the Product Development Plan. They are:

1. **Industry Growth** - The Tourism Strategy is intended to have a direct effect on economic growth for the tourism industry, individual businesses and the Nova Scotia economy.

2. **Sustainability** - The Strategy focuses on ensuring that the actions taken to grow the industry can be sustained for years to come, and the things that are done today will provide a solid basis for long-term economic growth.

3. **Quality of Life** - As well as generating direct revenues, tourism contributes economically to the quality of life for all Nova Scotians by providing employment, as well as generating tax revenues to fund health care and education. Tourism also provides infrastructure and recreational facilities which benefit both tourists and Nova Scotians.

The Essence of the *Tourism Strategy*

The essence of the *Tourism Strategy* is to "Protect, develop and communicate our identity as a seacoast touring destination."

Strategic Objectives

The *Tourism Strategy* supports the goals and strategic focus structured around the following objectives, which are positioned in three levels of priority:

1st Level Priorities

Grow revenues from the touring market - Our traditional markets must be further penetrated by enhancing the current marketing approach and encouraging new product development. An immediate focus would be the implementation of a European travel trade strategy to capture return visits. Encourage existing visitors to stay in the province longer and spend more money, thus enhancing yield.

Improve the quality, competitiveness and sustainability of our tourism product - Build a collaborative approach to enhance quality within the industry, emphasizing communications and standards.

2nd Level Priority

Build a 12-month season - Build partnerships among communities and industry to increase shoulder and winter season visitation and spending.

3rd Level Priorities

Develop viable niche markets - Strengthen key niches, such as Outdoor Nature, Golf and Group Tours by creating a product development plan addressing niches. More packaging and marketing initiatives will be created around each niche market segment.

Improve transportation access - Improve infrastructure to support efficient, convenient transportation.

Improve the business environment for tourism - Through policies, plans and partnerships, create an environment that is conducive to healthy, sustainable and responsible growth of the tourism industry.

Mandate of the Tourism Product Development Plan

Consistent with the mission of the Tourism Partnership Council, the mandate of the Tourism Product Development Plan is:

> *To substantially increase Nova Scotia tourism revenue by encouraging the growth, quality, competitiveness and sustainability of tourism development in Nova Scotia's tourism sector.*

Purpose

The purpose of the Tourism Product Development Plan is two-fold:

1. To serve as a basis for the Tourism Partnership Council / Product Development Committee to formulate an annual strategic Action Plan for product development, and;

2. As a document to focus discussion on product development within the tourism industry and in partnership with government, leading to the adoption of long term objectives and strategies to help maximize tourism benefits and competitively position Nova Scotia in the world marketplace.

Tourism Product Development Issues

There are many challenges and opportunities facing future tourism product development activities in Nova Scotia. Key to both the challenges and the opportunities is **quality**. Identified as a strategic objective in the Nova Scotia Tourism Strategy, quality has been adopted as an over-riding principle for this tourism product development plan. In order for future product development to be successful, more attention needs to be paid to not only delivering high quality but developing definitions, measures and standards of performance. With continuing pressure to increase Nova Scotia quality standards for products and services, a measurable connection between quality and profitability is needed in all aspects of development.

With the issue of quality in mind, the following have been identified as important issues currently facing tourism development:

Products - Build on Competitive Strengths
There is much work to be done in developing products and experiences in which Nova Scotia has a competitive strength. Our competitive strengths are those with a strong market appeal and the potential to contribute to increased demand and spending. In response to new trends and market demands, Nova Scotia must be able to forecast and develop new products and services in a timely manner. Packaging will be an important part of this new product development. Results

and continual updates of the Nova Scotia Product/Market Match study will assist in prioritizing development opportunities based on the right products for the right markets.

Seasonality
The strongly seasonal nature of tourism in Nova Scotia creates many challenges for the industry, including financing and capacity problems. Many private sector businesses, as well as federal and provincial parks, historic sites, museums and visitor information centres, close in mid-October only to open in May/June. Operators need more opportunities to develop and sell the winter and shoulder seasons.

Market - Readiness
Market-readiness can be looked at from two key perspectives. There is a need to ensure that tourism products and services are ready to meet (and exceed) the expectations of visitors by providing a quality product and valued experience. In addition, tourism operators need to be ready and able to do business in a professional, ethical, and viable manner. This includes conducting best business practices when dealing with the travel trade, visitors, and other industry partners.

Sustainability of Tourism
Tourism in Nova Scotia is based on our natural and cultural environment. These must be protected and preserved if we are to ensure the long term sustainability of tourism. The industry needs to find ways to balance visitor demands with environmental protection and cultural sensitivity. Tourism in Nova Scotia is highly dependant upon our natural land and shorelines. Indeed, this is the focus of how we market Nova Scotia. Input from the tourism industry on how these lands should be managed is seen as essential to sustainable development. A potential model for development would seek to place emphasis on higher yield visitation, which could represent lower volumes of tourists engaging in value added experiences and programs resulting in longer lengths of stay. This implies working cooperatively with a number of other entities to address issues such as resource management, coastal access, and viewscape management, to name a few. To that end an Integrated Resource Management (IRM) task force (as part of the Tourism Partnership Council) was established to review the provincial IRM process and how it pertains to tourism development.

Training and Development
Consistent with the over-riding principle of quality is the issue of training and development. Industry best practices need to be shared and incorporated into all aspects of business operations. Employee training, at all levels, is needed to improve the consistency of customer service quality in all sectors of the industry. Managers and owners need to invest time in training themselves, in order to improve their business environment, customer service and employee relations skills. Until the upper level employees are educated in the value of tourism as a profession, they will be unable to pass along their knowledge and instill pride of workplace to front line staff.

Training of front line staff is also necessary to ensure quality customer service across the province. The industry needs to invest more in certification and training programs; career paths need to be identified and job standards should be developed in more occupations. The industry is facing a labour shortage in some occupations, due to the industry's reputation for low uncompetitive wages and poor working conditions. Potentially as well, current front line employees need to be educated on the viability of the tourism industry as a career choice.

Technology

Technology is changing distribution systems and marketing opportunities, and the industry needs to better anticipate and understand the implications of such development, especially in terms of their relationships with customers and other suppliers/partners. Customers are increasingly doing business directly with suppliers and industry operators need to be ready to do business on-line. Increased education and training in the area of technology is needed in order to put Nova Scotia in a leadership position. The industry is thus faced with a constant challenge; to continue enhancing its understanding of technology, and to continue upgrading its use of technology.

Partnerships

There is increased duplication of tourism development activities, resulting in intense competition for already scarce partnership dollars at all levels. The respective roles of the partners (e.g., federal, provincial and municipal government agencies, regional development authorities, regional tourism associations, sector business associations, community development groups, and the private sector), need to be clarified. In many cases individual partners may not have much, if any, financial resources, making it necessary for individual projects to look at multiple partners and partnership opportunities for development dollars. As such, there is a growing need for coordination and a strategic focus on product development in order to work in partnership toward common goals.

Research

To enable businesses to compete and grow they need access to research information that is easy to interpret and use. This requires a coordinated and focused research program dedicated to developing and disseminating market research. In addition, there is a continued need to conduct research that forecasts new and upcoming products in response to market demands. This research also needs to be disseminated in a timely manner so businesses are able to make decisions using the most recent and accurate information.

Aging Infrastructure

There are serious concerns regarding the deterioration of tourism infrastructure at major historic sites (e.g., Fortress of Louisbourg), museums, and parks due to lack of financial resources to maintain and upgrade sites. There is a continuous need for the private sector to upgrade and enhance the physical plant (e.g., accommodations, campgrounds, restaurants) to meet and exceed the expectations of visitors. Other infrastructure issues include sewer treatment facilities in

destinations (e.g., Baddeck, Lunenburg), lack of public washroom facilities, lookoffs, beach access, signage, etc.

Transportation Access

There is a need to increase our inbound transportation capacity by working in partnership with major transportation carriers, including airlines, ferry companies, rail carriers and regulatory bodies. Connections to other transportation modes at points of entry need improved coordination; visitors spend too much time just "getting there" rather than enjoying their visit. While it is relatively easy for many customers to get here by road, much of Nova Scotia's highway system requires significant upgrading. This is especially important if the province is to continue being a premier touring destination.

Accommodation Capacity

Some destinations in the province must turn away business during peak season because of insufficient capacity in the peak season, yet operate at undesirable low occupancies other times of the year; other regions suffer from low occupancy rates year-round. This may be due to low quality, uncompetitive prices, a lack of things to see and do nearby, or other factors.

Financial Environment

There is a need to change the financial environment within the tourism industry. This requires an improved awareness and understanding of the nature of tourism businesses among financial institutions. At the same time, tourism businesses must become more sustainable and not just from an environmental and cultural perspective. They need to provide a financial return on investment, sustain jobs and ensure viability. In addition, businesses need to improve their knowledge of available financial resources and strategies for obtaining investment. A more positive business climate needs to be created, one that encourages investment and rewards risk. The current climate challenges industry members to be more innovative in how and where they secure funding resources for tourism development.

THE TOURISM PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Strategic Objective #1: Grow revenues from the touring market.

Product Development Objective 1.1: Expand and enhance Nova Scotia's attraction and activity base.

Action 1.1.1 Improve the physical quality and expand seasonal opportunities of existing attractions.

- Develop programming, demonstrations, participatory experiences, and increase educational and interpretive opportunities that will expand the season.
- Implement a "living history" program in historic sites, museums, and communities to bring alive their historical seacoast significance.
- Create new strategic product mixes (e.g., theatre/music in museums, artistic activities in natural settings).

Action 1.1.2 Develop attractions and activities which focus on history/heritage and seacoast themes.

- Re-establish the Bluenose II as a Provincial Tourism icon.
- Influence heritage restorations, downtown re-development, and waterfront projects.
- Encourage the development of cultural tourist attractions such as genealogy, multiculturalism, economuseums, performing arts, crafts and festivals (cultural divisions).
- Support the development of an implementation plan based on results of the Provincial Gaelic Study.

Action 1.1.3 Develop natural attractions and activities to enhance the seacoast experience.

- Continue to support the Bay of Fundy Product Club Program
- Implement the Bay of Fundy Development Plan
- Develop and enhance our coastal hiking/walking trails
- Develop and enhance birdwatching opportunities
- Develop increased coastal access and preservation of the marine environment, lighthouses and beaches.
- Develop other outdoor activities such as scuba diving, kayaking and cycling.

Action 1.1.4 Work with the Acadian community to establish priorities for development and marketing.

- Clarify roles and mandates of the various organizations.

- Develop and prioritize programming, demonstrations, participatory experiences and increase educational and interpretive opportunities.
- Continue to support the Acadian Tourism Product Club under the brand of L'Acadie.
- Work with the Acadie 2003-2005 Committee to ensure planned activities are market ready.

Action 1.1.5 Identify, support and develop major new attractions and destinations (i.e., aquariums, interpretive centres) that have the potential to become substantial travel generators.

Action 1.1.6 Develop visitor services infrastructure for cultural and natural attractions (e.g., attraction signage, lookoffs, washrooms, parking, etc.).

Action 1.1.7 Expand existing and initiate new development of the urban product.

Action 1.1.8 Encourage destination-type accommodation facilities such as coastal resorts, seaside cottages and RV parks.

Action 1.1.9 Work with the Aboriginal community to establish priorities for development and marketing.

Strategic Objective #1: Grow revenues from the touring market. (Cont'd)

Product Development Objective 1.2 **Increase visitor spending at tourist attractions, businesses, destinations and communities.**

Action 1.2.1 Increase sales through front-line staff.

- Promote a "sales" oriented culture, by initiating programs to educate operators in the implementation of yield management practices (e.g., how to maximize your profit margin, and "up selling" practices).
- Continue to train visitor information counsellors and Check In staff on how to "close the sale."
- Increase the availability and sales of "Made in Nova Scotia" products.

Action 1.2.2 Improve visitor satisfaction.

- Champion communities to become SuperHost Communities.
- Continue the delivery of service excellence programs (e.g., SuperHost - English, French) for front line staff.
- Develop an integrated Visitor Information Services (VIS) Strategy which addresses all aspects of visitor information services from a customer and quality services perspective.
- Support the development of an implementation plan for the Atlantic Canada Tourism Partnership (ACTP) Visitor Satisfaction Research Project.

Action 1.2.3 Extend lengths of stay.

- Continue to educate front line staff on the "things to see and do" in the area and the province (VIS Strategy).
- Inform community members of the tourism attractions, activities, and services in order that they may communicate the information to visitors.
- Extend hours of operation and length of season at museums, parks, attractions and businesses.

Strategic Objective #1: Grow revenues from the touring market. (Cont'd)

Product Development Objective 1.3: Increase the development of market-ready packaged products.

Action 1.3.1 Increase yield by providing education and training opportunities for package development.

- Conduct a series of marketing and "How to" seminars.
- Educate communities on marketing and "How-to-Package" their existing resources by partnering with the tourism industry.
- Train industry on the management of package tours (i.e., refund policies, commissionable rates, marketing of packages).

Action 1.3.2 Expand product base by developing additional packages.

- Develop a partnership program with tour operators on the development of packages.
- Develop multi-modal transportation packages (i.e., cruise/ motorcoach, ferry/drive, fly/rental (car, recreation vehicle).
- Develop packaging and partnering opportunities by communities and among communities along similar product lines (e.g., live theatre, cultural festivals, country exhibitions, golf course, and fall foliage).

Action 1.3.3 Ensure the distribution network for packages is efficient and effective.

Strategic Objective #2: **Improve the quality, competitiveness and sustainability of our tourism products.**

Product Development Objective 2.1: **Enhance the market-readiness of business operations, attractions and products.**

Action 2.1.1 Improve customer service and the quality of Nova Scotia products, destinations, operations and communities.

- Design and implement market-readiness enhancement programs.
- Identify and develop "Best Business Practice" opportunities.
- Support operators to attend "Best Business Practice" initiatives.
- Develop and implement appropriate training opportunities.
- Identify and support coastal communities for participation in a Sustainable Communities Program.

Action 2.1.2 Implement programs such as "Trade Smart" which identifies tourism suppliers who are qualified to meet the needs of the travel trade.

Strategic Objective #2: Improve the quality, competitiveness and sustainability of our tourism products. (Cont'd)

Product Development Objective 2.2: **Upgrade the service skills and training at all levels to improve the overall quality of service.**

Action 2.2.1 Improve professionalism in the tourism industry at both the service level and the managerial/administrative level.

- Improve the quality, availability and access to customer service training.
- Work towards the mandatory implementation of existing national occupational standards and certification.
- In sectors where standards do not currently exist, develop and implement occupational standards.
- Increase the awareness of tourism as a positive career choice.
- Conduct more case studies and research dealing with return on investment (ROI).
- Train management and staff in quality consumer hospitality expectations and skills.

Action 2.2.2 Educate the industry on "best business practices" in the tourism sector.

- Implement a Nova Scotia "Trade Smart" program to evaluate and certify tourism operators who conduct best business practices with the travel trade.
- Develop training and mentoring programs focusing on market-readiness (e.g., Introductory "Marketing 101," Adventure Tourism, Community Tourism Planning).
- Encourage mentoring programs between established businesses and entrepreneurs.

Strategic Objective #2: Improve the quality, competitiveness and sustainability of our tourism products. (Cont'd)

Product Development Objective 2.3: Improve the quality of the tourism plant, products and experiences.

Action 2.3.1 Enforce standards of quality for tourism facilities (fixed-roof accommodations and campgrounds) in order to meet and exceed visitor expectations.

- Improve the utilization and quality of existing fixed-roof accommodations and campgrounds through upgrading and redesign.
- Incorporate service considerations into the licensing requirements for the tourism plant.
- Enforce industry standards in areas such as grading (Canada Select and Camping Select) and certification.

Action 2.3.2 Establish and implement standards of quality for other tourism facilities in order to meet and exceed visitor expectations.

- Improve the Taste of Nova Scotia program and other programs focussed on the quality of food services and use of Nova Scotia food products.
- Work with restaurants to expand their menus based on Nova Scotia's cultures and traditional cuisines, with focus on our seafood product.
- Develop and implement grading programs for attractions, adventure tourism operators, restaurants, festivals & events, and others.

Action 2.3.3 Explore alternative financing options for development of the tourism plant.

- Develop a "Financing Pathway Guide" to identify the programs and contacts for tourism operators to access public and private sector financing for upgrading and enhancement of facilities.
- Develop "Investment Opportunity Profiles" that identify potential areas for investment consideration.

Action 2.3.4 Improve productivity through the adoption of technological innovations.

- Offer "Best Practices" seminars on how to use technology for improved guest relations, accounting and financing.
- Develop training programs to educate operators on website marketing, e-commerce, and other uses of technology in business operations.

Strategic Objective #2: **Improve the quality, competitiveness and sustainability of our tourism products. (Cont'd)**

Product Development Objective 2.4: **Ensure sustainable tourism development that is commercially viable and environmentally and culturally sensitive.**

Action 2.4.1 Develop and adopt sustainable tourism codes of conduct and management principles for industry and government utilizing sound environmental practices.

- Work cooperatively with government departments and with industry, communities, organizations, and the public on issues affecting tourism and the environment.
- Implement landscape management practices to protect scenic areas.
- Influence government to allocate sufficient resources to existing parks and historic sites to provide tourism services and amenities, as well as adequate maintenance and conservation.

Action 2.4.2 Develop and adopt guiding principles related to cultural tourism development and communicate these to the tourism industry.

- Improve the tourism working relationship with cultural and heritage communities.
- Establish a "code of ethics" for developing cultural tourism initiatives.
- Assist cultural groups with the development and management of quality products by strengthening and protecting the integrity of their cultural products.

Strategic Objective #2: Improve the quality, competitiveness and sustainability of our tourism products. (Cont'd)

Product Development Objective 2.5: Develop policies and strategies that support the growth of the tourism industry, with an environmental focus.

Action 2.5.1 Establish policy task forces (industry and government) to examine issues such as:

- Coastal access
- Natural resource management (e.g., Clear cutting, integrated resource management)
- Scenic view planes
- Peggy's Cove Capacity
- Whale watching

Strategic Objective #3: Build a 12-month season.

Product Development Objective 3.1: **Develop year-round tourism attractions and activities to enhance the shoulder and winter season product base.**

Action 3.1.1 Increase meetings, conventions, and incentive travel.

- Develop and enhance products to meet the market needs for meetings, convention and incentive travel.

Action 3.1.2 Develop year-round products.

- Expand fall and spring operating schedules of provincial, federal and private sector facilities and transportation links (e.g., visitor information centres, parks, museums, attractions, accommodations, restaurants, etc.)
- Identify and develop products for extended season and winter activity.
- Develop special interest packages and programs (i.e., cuisine, theatre, shopping).
- Further develop motorcoach products through creative programming and itineraries.

Action 3.1.3 Develop seasonal products and events.

- Develop the province as a pre-eminent fall foliage tour destination.
- Identify and develop seasonal festivals and events.
- Develop Nova Scotia cuisine and wine products, such as apples, blueberries, maple sugar, Acadian, seafood.
- Develop and improve quality port activity packages to meet and exceed the needs of cruise ship markets.

Strategic Objective #4: Develop viable niche markets.

Product Development Objective 4.1: **Develop market-driven products and packages targeted to high-growth, high-yield markets.**

Action 4.1.1 Ensure tourism development is research-based and utilizes the results of the Product Market Match Study.

- Update the Product Market Match (PMM) model and distribute the results to the industry.
- Conduct strategic product research where gaps exist.

Action 4.1.2 Develop viable niche product strategies for the following:

- Outdoor nature;
- Golf;
- Meetings, conventions, and incentive travel (MC&IT);
- Group touring.

Action 4.1.3 Identify and develop new and emerging niche product strategies for:

- Cuisine;
- Wine;
- Spas/Resorts.

Strategic Objective #5: Improve transportation access.

Product Development Objective 5.1: **Improve transportation access to the province.**

Action 5.1.1 Improve air access to Nova Scotia from our core and developing markets.

Action 5.1.2 Expand and promote Halifax International Airport as an international gateway to Canada.

Action 5.1.3 Lobby the federal government to ensure airfares are competitive with other destinations.

Action 5.1.4 Influence the federal government to change the transport policy to allow international air carriers to fly into Halifax.

Action 5.1.5 Deregulate the motorcoach industry.

Action 5.1.6 Increase cruise ship traffic to Nova Scotia.

Action 5.1.7 Review cruise ship and other transport regulations to ensure that the needs of the visitor are exceeded.

Action 5.1.8 Expand the utilization of ferries as an alternate travel mode to enhance the Nova Scotia experience.

Action 5.1.9 Expand fall and spring ferry operating schedules.

Action 5.1.10 Develop long-haul rail excursions to Nova Scotia.

Action 5.1.11 Work with Canada Customs to develop a more customer service oriented environment.

Strategic Objective #5: Improve transportation access. (Cont'd)

Product Development Objective 5.2: **Improve internal provincial transportation links and infrastructure.**

Action 5.2.1 Evaluate the existing travelway and scenic drives system throughout Nova Scotia from a visitor's perspective, and how it impacts/enhances the coastal experience.

Action 5.2.2 Develop pull-offs and roadside points of interest for scenic touring throughout the province.

Action 5.2.3 Encourage the establishment of more rest areas and natural stopping points to meet the needs of the travelling public.

Action 5.2.4 Improve navigational highway signage and roadside services to meet the needs of the travelling public.

Action 5.2.5 Encourage litter abatement and the provision of greenbelts along scenic routes.

- Encourage community groups to adopt and maintain litter control through the implementation of the Adopt-A-Highway program.
- Implement Scenic View Management Plans along travelways to ensure unobstructed and scenic views. (Example: Viewscapes project in Cape Breton).

Action 5.2.6 Coordinate air, bus, rail, taxi, car rental, and ferry modes in terms of scheduling and easing of transfers, particularly in destination areas.

Action 5.2.7 Ensure the availability of charter buses, RV's and rental cars for tourist travel, especially in peak periods.

Action 5.2.8 Encourage and promote air service to local airports, where feasible.

Action 5.2.9 Educate and influence the Nova Scotia Department of Transportation and Public Works on the importance of upgrading highways for their value to tourism.

Strategic Objective #6: Improve the business environment for tourism.

Product Development Objective 6.1: **Increase the awareness of the importance of tourism to the economy of Nova Scotia.**

Action 6.1.1 Ensure the accuracy of information used to measure tourism impact.

- Collect and distribute accurate information on the economic impact of tourism and other relevant performance statistics in a timely manner.
- Communicate the value of tourism to government, industry, communities, municipal units and the public.

Action 6.1.2 Improve communications to the tourism industry.

- Continue to create a more positive media profile for tourism.
- Establish a mechanism for communicating tourism awareness within the industry and to the general public.

Action 6.1.3 Increase awareness of tourism through education and training.

- Educate industry more on the needs and characteristics of visitors.
- Ensure tourism is included in the appropriate education curricula.
- Ensure front line staff in various sectors become more knowledgeable of their area, the province and the economic importance of tourism.
- Educate banks, other lending institutions, and financial assistance agencies about the opportunities and economic impact of the tourism industry.
- Educate governments on the value of tourism to the economy of Nova Scotia.

Action 6.1.4 Foster entrepreneurship in the tourism industry.

- Tourism entrepreneurship should be encouraged in the educational system and through special programs (e.g., Centre for Entrepreneurship).

Strategic Objective #6: Improve the business environment for tourism. (Cont'd)

Product Development Objective 6.2: **Conduct, interpret, analyse and communicate necessary research to assist in product development, business and planning decisions.**

Action 6.2.1 Survey existing visitors and travel wholesalers to determine what brought them to Nova Scotia, what their expectations were and whether they were met.

- Conduct a visitor exit survey with industry/government partners targeting market information and product satisfaction on the seasonal traveller.
- Conduct the Visitor Exit Survey more frequently than every four years using industry partners.
- Disseminate the results of the visitor exit survey on a timely basis outlining key findings and visitor satisfaction.
- Use survey information from tourism operations to address visitor satisfaction levels.
- Provide information and programs for owners and managers on market and product trends and opportunities.

Strategic Objective #6: Improve the business environment for tourism. (Cont'd)

Product Development Objective 6.3: Develop policies and economic strategies which support growth of the tourism industry.

Action 6.3.1 Establish a policy task force (industry and government) for tourism to examine issues such as:

- Deregulation of retail shopping hours
- Off-premise advertising signage policy
- Deregulation of motorcoach
- Open Skies
- Ferries

Action 6.3.2 Partner with tourism stakeholders to implement the recommendations of the Policy Task Force.

Strategic Objective #6: Improve the business environment for tourism. (Cont'd)

Product Development Objective 6.4: **Improve the coordination of product development efforts in the province.**

Action 6.4.1 Ensure the adoption of this Product Development Plan and the subsequent annual product priorities by all regional stakeholders.

Action 6.4.2 Identify and encourage coordination of product development efforts.

- Build a collaborative partnership with government agencies directly or indirectly involved in tourism in order to coordinate policies which support tourism.
- Develop regional priorities and development plans through the coordination and communication of stakeholders based on this provincial plan.
- Work to build and strengthen partnerships with tourism organizations at the Atlantic Canada and national levels to leverage product development opportunities.
- Coordinate partnerships among the public and private sectors to expand resources available for product development.

Action 6.4.3 Clarify the roles and mandates of our industry organizations.

- Clarify the mandates, roles and responsibilities of the various tourism organizations and associations in the province.
- Examine alternatives to strengthen viable industry organizations.
- Ensure that the priorities of the plan are communicated to the industry stakeholders involved in product development.

The Challenge: Implementation

While we sometimes like to think that the most challenging part of any strategy is the development of the strategy itself, in reality the major challenge is the implementation of the plan. As no one individual or group can implement the above Tourism Product Development Plan, the challenge is for each respective stakeholder to identify the initiatives that they will focus on implementing. Beginning with the 2002/03 year, the Tourism Partnership Council's Product Development Committee will use the long term product development plan to establish annual priorities and measurable actions. This annual plan will be monitored on an ongoing basis and will be used to assist in establishing priorities and actions in each subsequent year.

Performance Measures

How will we know we've been successful? During the life of the Tourism Product Development Plan, at the beginning of each year priority actions will be identified, part of developing the full action plan will include measurements and benchmarks for success. These measurements will be directly related to the initiative attached to each priority action.

Next Steps

The Tourism Product Development Plan identifying development priorities over the next 3-5 years is now complete. The priority actions for the first year have been identified in an annual plan for 2002/03. The following steps will be taken over the next year.

- Adoption of the overall Tourism Product Development Plan and the Annual Plan for year one, will take place at the TIANS Conference in November (2001).
- The industry, with the Product Development Committee of the Tourism Partnership Council as the lead, will begin implementation of the Annual Product Development Plan (December 2001).
- In the summer of 2002, the Tourism Partnership Council Product Development Committee will begin setting the priority actions for the following year (year 2).
- Fall 2002, the Product Development Committee will continue and complete another Annual Plan for new priorities for the subsequent year.